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TENSIONS HIGH AS PAK AIRSTRIKES IN AFGHAN TERRITORY KILLS EIGHT

The Pakistan Army said eight terrorists were killed in 'anti-terror operations' in the border regions inside Afghanistan on Monday

A RESPONSE TO ATTACK ON ARMY OUTPOST: PAK

The airstrikes come amid heightened tensions between the two neighbours over a series of terrorist attacks in Pakistan's Balochistan province, which Islamabad has blamed on groups based in Afghanistan. Pakistan said Monday's airstrikes, which were in response to a recent attack on one of its army outposts, targeted a group allied with Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan | PTI

STRIKE KILLED CIVILIANS, SAYS TALIBAN

- Afghan Taliban said Pakistan targeted civilian homes and claimed five women and three children were killed in the pre-dawn strike
- Tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan rose after the Taliban took power in Kabul in 2021. Pakistan said it had repeatedly urged the group to act against terror outfits operating in Afghanistan

6,000

PAK TALIBAN FIGHTERS IN AFGHANISTAN, SAYS PAKISTAN OFFICIAL

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SC raps SBI for selective data share on bonds

Directs bank to disclose all details, including alphanumeric numbers, to the poll panel

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY
@ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Monday directed the State Bank of India (SBI) to disclose all details related to the electoral bonds in its possession by March 21, including the unique alphanumeric numbers that can link donors to political parties.

Rapping the public sector lender over selective disclosure, the Supreme Court said it had in its February 15 verdict sought complete disclosure of all data related to electoral bonds in the bank's possession.

The bench noted the submission of senior advocate Harish Salve, who appeared for the SBI, that there is no reservation on the part of the bank in disclosing all the details of electoral bonds in its possession.

"We had asked all details to be disclosed by the SBI which includes electoral bond numbers as well. Let SBI not be selective in disclosure," the five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud said.

The bank's chairperson was also directed to file an affidavit by 5 pm on March 21 stating that all details have been disclosed to the Election Commission (EC). The court went on to direct the Chief Election Commissioner to file a detailed compliance affidavit by March 21 to ensure no further complications arise over the matter.

The details sought are related to electoral bonds purchased and redeemed after April 12, 2019. The court, however, rejected a plea urging it to order the SBI to disclose details related to electoral bonds purchased and redeemed prior to this date.

"With effect from April 12, 2019, we had directed the collection of details. Everyone was put to notice at that time. This is why we did not ask for disclosure of bonds sold prior to the interim order. This was a conscious choice by the Constitution bench," the bench said.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta said after the March 11 order (on SBI's plea for time till June 30 to furnish details of electoral bonds to the EC), those before the court started giving press interviews deliberately embarrassing the bench. But the court said its shoulders were "broad enough" to face the broadside.

Chief Justice Chandrachud said once the court delivers a judgment, it becomes the nation's property and is open for debate. He went on to say that court was only concerned about enforcing its directions.

Plea against disclosure

The Supreme Court on Monday refused to entertain pleas by Associated Chambers of Commerce & Industry of India and Confederation of Indian Industry seeking to delay the disclosure of electoral bond numbers | P12

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, accompanied by BJP candidates for Davanagere Gayathri Siddeshwara and Shivamogga B Y Raghavendra, arrive at the election rally venue in Shivamogga on Monday | EXPRESS

KSE skips Modi rally in Shivamogga

Senior BJP leader KS Eshwarappa did not attend PM Narendra Modi's rally in Shivamogga on Monday, sending a strong signal to the party that he is determined to contest as an Independent.

Now, Sadananda keeps 'options open'

Former CM DV Sadananda Gowda, who was denied an LS poll ticket by the BJP, said he has kept his option open of contesting from Congress. He said Congress leaders were in touch with him.

POLL PANEL TRANSFERS WEST BENGAL DGP

New Delhi: The Election Commission of India on Monday ordered the transfers of the West Bengal DGP and home secretaries in six states — Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. It also mandated the appointment of Vivek Sahay, once suspended by the poll panel, as the new Bengal police chief | P9

Modi: I.N.D.I.A bloc aiming to destroy Shakti concept

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Shivamogga

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Monday alleged that the I.N.D.I.A bloc has proclaimed to destroy the Shakti concept, which not only disrespects the Hindu dharma but also the Nari Shakti (women power). He said the opposition alliance will definitely come to know about Shakti's significance on June 4, the day Lok Sabha election results are announced.

Addressing a mega election rally in Shivamogga, covering four parliamentary constituencies of Shivamogga, Chikkamagaluru-Udupi, Davanagere and Chitradurga, he said, "Nari Shakti is a symbol of Maa Shakti, which is my armour."

Quoting the example of the relationship between Chhatrapati Shivaji and Maa Bhavani, Modi said he is a devotee of Hindu religion and offers pooja to Bharata Maata, but opposition parties say they will destroy Shakti. "While the I.N.D.I.A bloc attacks the womenfolk, BJP focuses on women empowerment. Join hands with BJP," he exhorted voters.

"The British left this country, but Congress still has the mindset of the British. Even today, Congress relies on divide-and-rule policy and aims to divide the country along caste and religious lines," he said.

Referring to an earlier statement by Bengaluru Rural MP DK Suresh, he said, "A Congress MP makes a statement of division of North and South, exhibiting their mentality."

BJP selected a tribal woman as the President of India. BJP has ample scope to make a Scheduled Caste the chief minister. BJP is committed to provide social justice to all sections of society, he added.

Winding up his speech, Modi told the gathering that he is waiting for their guarantee that the lotus will bloom in the state. They responded saying they will. MORE: P4

PM calls certain Cong leader 'collection minister'

Indirectly referring to DCM DK Shivakumar, PM Narendra Modi on Monday said there is a leader in the ruling party who is a "'CM in waiting', 'Future CM', 'Super CM', 'Shadow CM', and 'Delhi Collection Minister'".

Deal struck in Bihar, BJP gets 17 seats, JD(U) 16

RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR
@ New Delhi

THE BJP on Monday ironed out its seat-sharing deal with National Democratic Alliance partners in Bihar, pocketing 17 of the 40 Lok Sabha seats in the state.

It emerged as the undisputed big brother in the alliance, as the JD(U) will contest from 16, Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) 5 and the Hindustan Awam Morcha (HAM) and Rashtriya Lok Morcha (RLM) one each.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP, JD(U) and the undivided LJP were part of the NDA, which won 39 of the 40 seats.

Both the BJP and JD(U) had contested from 17 seats each at that point in time.

The big headline maker this time was Chirag Paswan, son of LJP founder Ram Vilas Paswan. His faction, LJP (RV), got five constituencies, including the prestigious Hajipur, the seat held by his late dad. Chirag later said he will vacate his Jamui seat and contest from Hajipur.

Chirag's gain was Union minister Pashupati Kumar Paras's loss. Paras, the brother of Ram Vilas, is the sitting MP from Hajipur. His breakaway faction of the LJP has five seats in the outgoing Lok Sabha. Paras is expected to tap the RJD-led grand alliance in Bihar in a day or two.

BJP sources said they were trying to mollify Paras with possibly a governor's berth while accommodating his son and others from his faction in the assembly elections.

However, his party could go it alone or forge a tie-up with the opposition. The NDA deal was announced by Vinod Tawde, BJP in-charge of Bihar unit of the party.

FUN & FROLIC

Devotees celebrate Lathmar Holi at Sri Ji temple near Mathura on Monday | P11

Bizman attacked over 'chalisa'? Police say no

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

A 26-year-old shopkeeper was attacked by a group of six men for reportedly playing 'Hanuman Chalisa', claiming that the loud music will disturb 'Azan' prayers. The incident happened at Siddannagalli in Halasuru Gate police limits on Sunday between 6 pm and 6.40 pm. The police, however, said that during their investigation they found that the victim was neither playing 'Hanuman Chalisa' nor the fight was over the music disturbing 'Azan' prayers.

The video of the incident went viral and netizens took to social media and poured in their comments. Taking to X, BJP condemned the incident, saying the Congress government in the state is 'anti-Hindu'.

The victim, G Mukesh, a resident of Cubbonpet, filed a police complaint against Suleman, Shanavaz, Rohith, Dyanish, Taruna and others at 10.30 pm on Sunday. Mukesh was taken to Victoria Hospital for treatment. P4

A CCTV footage of the group attacking the shopkeeper, in Bengaluru

Satyendar Jain back in jail after SC cancels bail

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY
@ New Delhi

AAP leader and former Delhi minister Satyendar Jain on Monday returned to Tihar jail after the Supreme Court cancelled his regular bail plea and asked him to surrender immediately. He was out on interim bail on health grounds in the Delhi excise policy scam case since May 26 last year. The bail was extended multiple times on various grounds, primarily citing his health.

A two-judge bench of justices Bela M Trivedi and Pankaj Mithal declined Jain's plea to grant him at least a week to surrender, though he claimed that he continued to be unwell. "Jain arrived at Tihar jail in the evening. He was taken to jail number 7 after the formalities of lodging him in the prison were completed," a jail official said.

On December 14, 2023, the court had extended his interim bail till January 8. On January 17, senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, appearing for Jain, had requested regular bail claiming that the health of his client was deteriorating.

The Enforcement Directorate had registered a case against Jain, based on a CBI complaint that he had acquired movable properties in the name of various persons for which he did not give satisfactory answers.

Don't act against shops on Kannada boards: HC

Bengaluru: The Karnataka HC ordered authorities not to take precipitative action over display of 60% Kannada in name boards if the Karnataka Language Development (Amendment) Act has not come into force | P3

Nine killed as building collapses in Kolkata

Kolkata: A five-storey under-construction building, said to be an illegal structure, collapsed on adjoining tiled-roof shanties in Garden Reach here early on Monday, leaving nine dead and at least 15 seriously injured | P10

EXPRESS READ

Bought electoral bonds in personal capacity: Shaw

Bengaluru: Biocon executive chairperson Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw on Monday clarified that the company did not make any political donation to any party. Shaw said she purchased electoral bonds in her personal capacity and donated to JDS and other parties | P12

ON THE MAT

Ad-hoc panel dissolved, WFI requests to host national camps

FIROZ MIRZA @ Chennai

The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) on Monday dissolved the ad-hoc committee formed on December 27, 2023 to manage the day-to-day affairs of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI). The decision paved the way for the federation led by Sanjay Kumar Singh, considered a close associate of former WFI president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, to take administrative control of the sport.

"The decision to dissolve the Ad-hoc Committee comes in light of the lifting of the ban on the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) by the United World Wrestling (UWW) and the successful completion of Selection Trials by the Ad-hoc Committee appointed by the IOA as per the directives of the Hon'ble High Court of Delhi," said the IOA order.

Interestingly, the sports ministry — which on December 24, 2023 directed the IOA to form the ad-hoc committee three days after the Sanjay Singh-led panel won 13 out of 15 posts in the election — has not issued any order this time. The IOA also instructed WFI to appoint a "Safeguarding Committee" to address concerns of sexual harassment apart from conducting elections of the Athletes' Commission.

Soon after the order, Sanjay Singh wrote to the Sports Authority of India (SAI), requesting it to facilitate the hosting of national camps for the Asian Championships and Asian Olympic Games Qualifier scheduled next month. "The top-four (gold, silver and two bronze medallists) of the trials are eligible for the camp," Sanjay Singh told this daily.

This means Vinesh, who participated in two weight categories — 50kg and 53kg winning the first and finishing with bronze in the second — will be named as a camper. Bajrang Punia, who lost the 65kg semi-final before skipping the bronze medal bout, may miss out. Sources, however, believe he can still make it if SAI wants. "If the SAI wants to add names including that of Bajrang, it can do that," said a WFI source.

Notably, Bajrang and Vinesh, along with Sakshi Malik, spearheaded the protest against Brij Bhushan last year accusing the UP strongman of sexual harassment.

HC reserves order on Board exams

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

THE division bench of Karnataka High Court on Monday reserved its order on the appeals filed by the state government against quashing of Board examinations for Classes 5, 8 and 9 by a single judge.

A division bench of Justices K Somashekar and Rajesh Rai K reserved the order after the conclusion of the arguments by the state government and counter-arguments by the counsel of the RTE Students and Parents Association and the petitioners.

Allowing the petitions filed by the Registered Unaided Private Schools Management Association Karnataka and the Organisation for Unaided Recognised Schools, the single judge had quashed the board exams. Against this, the state government filed the appeal before the division bench which passed the interim order permitting the state government to conduct the Board examinations.

Aggrieved petitioners then approached the Supreme Court, which set aside the division bench's interim order and remitted the matter to the division bench to decide it on its merits. CONTINUED ON: P5

NRN gifts Infy shares worth ₹240 cr to grandson

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

INFOSYS founder NR Narayana Murthy has gifted 15 lakh shares or 0.04% stake worth over Rs 240 crore in the IT company to his four-month-old grandson Ekagrah Rohan Murty.

According to regulatory filings, Murthy gifted these shares in an off-market transaction on March 15. Following this, Murthy's holding in Infosys fell to 0.36% from 0.40%. Infosys shares on Monday closed at Rs 1,602.30 apiece on the BSE.

Ekagrah is the third grandchild of Narayana Murthy and Sudha Murty. They have two other grandchildren Krishna and Anoushka, daughters of Akshata Murty and UK PM Rishi Sunak.

Rohan Murty and his wife Aparna Krishnan announced the arrival of their baby boy in November last year.

Sudha Murty, who recently took oath as Rajya Sabha member, holds 0.83% stake worth about Rs 5,600 crore in Infosys. She holds about 3.45 crore shares as of December 31, 2023.

While their daughter holds 0.94% stake, Rohan Murty holds 1.47% stake in the IT company. Sudha Murty gave her husband Rs 10,000 as seed capital to start the company, which was founded by Murthy in 1981. From a capital of $250, it has grown to a $18.55 billion company. At the end of FY23, the company's headcount stood at 3,43,234.

In January, Infosys was recognised as the Top 3 IT services brand globally and the fastest growing IT services brand over a five-year period, according to Brand Finance. Infosys brand value has more than doubled in the last five years, and at over $14 billion in 2024, Infosys is ranked as No 145 most valuable brand in the world.